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ABSTRACT

Simulation should be a principal feature of a counselor education program. Simulation is a controlled representation of a real situation. In a systematic counseling training program, emphasis is placed on the establishment of instructional objectives and the use of simulation experiences to reach these goals. Instructional objectives are prepared following Mager (1962) which include conditions, terminal behavior, and criteria. The levels of simulation of reading and listening, modeling, practice experiences and role playing, and supervised experience are used to develop each of these counselor skills. The use of simulation in a systematic training program is carefully planned and presented to the trainee as an instructional package for the mastery of a specified counselor skill. (Author)

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SIMULATION IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

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Abstract

Simulation should be a principal feature of a counselor education program. Simulation is a controlled representation of a real situation. In a systematic counseling training program, emphasis is placed on the establishment of instructional objectives and the use of simulation experiences to reach these goals. Instructional objectives are prepared following Mager (1962) which include conditions, terminal behavior, and criteria. The levels of simulation of reading and listening, modeling, practice experiences and role playing, and supervised experience are used to develop each of these counselor skills. The use of simulation in a systematic training program is carefully planned and presented to the trainee as an instructional package for the mastery of a specified counselor skill.

SIMULATION IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Simulation should be a principal feature of a counselor education program. Simulation is a controlled representation of a real situation. In a systematic counseling training program, emphasis is placed on the establishment of instructional objectives and the use of simulation experiences to reach these goals. Levels of simulation are used to introduce a "programmed" aspect into the sequence of learning experiences. These levels are degrees of approximation to actual counseling. The lowest level is theoretical and abstract; the highest level of simulation contains all of the elements of the desired terminal behavior. In a systematic counseling program, there are four levels of simulation for each counselor skill being taught: reading and listening, modeling, practice experiences and role playing, and supervised experience. Before discussing simulation experiences at each of these levels, let us look at the nature of the instructional objectives in a systematic training program.

Systems analysis of the counseling process identifies the counseling procedures or performance skills that must be taught to each trainee. Following the flowchart, the counselor trainee must be able to receive client referrals, prepare for the interview, structure the counseling process, discuss client concerns, establish a goal for counseling stated as a behavioral objective, conduct task operations, evaluate counseling, and terminate. This sequence of procedures encompasses the entire counseling process. These behaviors are too global, however, in which to give instruction without first breaking them down. To do this, instructional objectives at each level of simulation are stated for

each counselor skill being taught.

Following Mager's (1962) specifications, instructional objectives consist of a statement of terminal behavior, conditions, and criteria. The purpose is to tell the counselor trainee precisely what he is to be able to do as a result of the instruction. Winborn, Hinds, and Stewart have written an article entitled "Instructional Objectives for the Professional Preparation of Counselors" which appears in the Winter, 1971 issue of Counselor Education and Supervision. This article discusses the construction of instructional objectives and gives examples. As we said, instructional objectives consist of terminal behavior, conditions, and criteria. A statement of terminal behavior specifies what the learner is to do in behavioral terms. As an example, one terminal behavior desired in the practicum course might be communicating five information-seeking methods to clients whose concerns are related to lack of information. The conditions of the instructional objectives are the circumstances under which the desired accomplishment is to be demonstrated; they are the "given." The conditions under which learning could be demonstrated might be described as "with practicum clients." The criteria of an instructional objective is the level or quality of performance that is required for satisfactory completion of the instructional objective. An example of a criteria is "mentioning five or more methods to three clients." Recall that I said a moment ago that instructional objectives are used with each level of simulation. Each type of simulation experience mentioned earlier will now be elaborated upon.

Entry Level - Reading and Listening

Reading about a counselor skill or listening to a lecture on it is the lowest level of simulation. As a starting point, reading has the obvious advantage of being a type of learning experience that provides a great deal of general learning yet requires a minimum of instructor involvement. Reading assignments should focus on one counselor skill at a time and should be chosen for the clarity with which the performance of the skill is described. Listening to a lecture which parallels the reading assignment, given by the instructor in person or on audio or video tape, may be an additional first level experience. As a check on his familiarity with vocabulary and basic concepts, the learner takes a self test over the reading and lecture material. In order to lead up to the instructional objective given above as an example, intermediate objectives should be formulated. An instructional objective appropriate to the learning experiences in the first level of simulation would be: "Having read an assignment and listened to a lecture on information seeking methods, the trainee will write down from memory any five of the following: reading, writing, asking, listening, observations, and talking." If the trainee does not reach the required level on the self test, he restudies the reading assignment and listens to the taped lecture again. When he has reached the prescribed level of competence, the trainee moves on to the next higher level of simulation.

Second Level - Modeling

The second level of simulation is modeling. Modeling can involve live models or the use of video demonstration tapes which show the counselor skill being studied. For example, the description of information-seeking methods to

a client and a discussion of how to use them is a counselor skill that might be demonstrated on tape. After seeing a demonstration sequence, the student then watches taped exercises in which he distinguishes between correct and inadequate demonstrations of the skills. In this way he has the opportunity to apply his knowledge before he is required to use it creatively. An example of an instructional objective in the modeling level of simulation might be "having watched several video tapes of a counselor communicating information seeking modes, the trainee will distinguish between adequate and inadequate demonstrations according to criteria given in class." As a second part of the modeling experience, the trainee may be asked to select the best of several counselor models presented. After the trainee has made his selection, the taped counselor repeats the best model. This use of video tape is extremely useful in developing interview skills although it is sometimes overlooked. These experiences permit discrimination learning with immediate knowledge of results, and teach the application of principles.

Third Level - Practice Responses and Role Playing

Practice or "try out" experiences bridge the gap between theories and professional use of counselor skills. Practice experiences may be introduced by the use of simulated client stimuli in the form of written statements, audio statements, or video tapes of clients statements. The trainee's task, of course, is to respond to the client stimuli in an appropriate manner. Client stimuli may be prepared to simulate an initial greeting by a client, a question about the nature of counseling, an emotional statement of concern, a question, a statement about himself, or any other typical client statement. Video presentations are particularly useful as an introduction to role playing because they contain many of the visual cues the counselor receives from a client, in addition to auditory and content information.

Role playing is the second phase of this level of simulation. Role playing requires the counselor trainee to demonstrate specific counselor skills through interaction with a role playing peer or child. In contrast to the responses given to the client stimuli just discussed, role playing involves a segment of continuous rather than discrete responses to stimuli. Roles may be either described for the role playing client or left up to his imagination. The trainee is rated by an observer on his demonstrated competence. Role playing is a relatively high level of simulation to an actual interview, but it gives the trainee the opportunity to learn from mistakes without suffering the consequences of them. It also provides the opportunity to get direct feedback from other counselor trainees who role play clients, as well as from supervisors. Role playing may provide repeated practice of specific counselor skills until a minimum level of performance is reached. An instructional objective that might be met through role playing could be stated as follows: given a role playing situation with a client who seeks information, the counselor trainee will communicate at least five methods of getting information. This will be attained when the client is able to repeat to the counselor the information-seeking tasks he is to perform.

Fourth Level - Supervised Experience

Supervised experience with immediate feedback provided is the fourth training approximation to the desired terminal behavior of independent counseling. Practicum experiences in the field should be preceded by supervised experiences in the counseling laboratory of a counselor education department. Supervised experiences provide for immediate feedback on performance, as arrangements are made to bring a client into a counseling office equipped with observation facilities. An earpiece, worn by the counselor, may even permit

supervisor assistance without interruption of the session. Interviews may also be put on audio or video tape for later joint critiquing. Supervised experience with an actual client in the counseling lab is a preferable introduction to the usual type of practicum in which the instructor hears recordings of interviews made in cooperating schools. The trainee profits from both the reality of the situation and the immediacy of feedback on his methods. In supervised experience the trainee would be demonstrating his attainment of the original instructional objective: "Given a client whose concern is lack of information, the trainee will communicate verbally at least five information seeking methods and will discuss their use with the client." Field experiences in counseling in which attainment of this objective is further demonstrated would complete the transition to independent use of this counseling skill. Of course, the illustration used is only one of a large number of instructional objectives that can be formulated and reached through a simulation based counselor education program.

Instructional Handouts

The use of simulation in a systematic training program is carefully coordinated through the use of instructional handouts. These are presented to the trainee as an instructional package for mastery of each counseling procedure or skill. These handouts sequence the learning experiences that provide instruction in each counselor skill that is required. They state instructional objectives that are to be met; contain assigned reading or give references for assignments; provide instructions for modeling, role playing, or supervised experience; and include self tests and feedback. Recycling, or repeating

learning experiences, is required at each level of simulation until a minimum level of performance is reached. The instructional handouts might vary in length from about five to more than ten pages. Trainees may work through the units either as a class or individually in a guidance laboratory situation. Instructors and teaching assistants answer questions and give feedback on role playing and supervised experience.

In summary, we have examined the use of simulation in a counselor education program. The use of instructional objectives was described. Simulation experiences at the four levels of reading and listening, modeling, practice experiences and role playing, and supervised experience were discussed. Last, instructional handouts which organize these learning experiences were described.